

## **Team One**

The task of Team One is to identify points where we can intervene with youth and prevent them from ever entering the juvenile justice system. Runaway youth and youth who have been abused and neglected are two identified populations that are at critical risk of entering the juvenile justice system (as the defendant.) This is no small task—and consequently a tremendous amount of progress has not been made under the CJSP Team Goals.

### **Runaway Youth**

The Run Response team has been meeting regularly since January 2004. This group of professionals addresses the problems surrounding runaway youth in Lincoln/Lancaster County. The group discusses active cases and means of intervening with youth currently on run (rather than waiting until the youth commits a law violation). Policies about how to better address runaway youth are also discussed during the meetings. For instance, can we contact families who have reported a youth on run—prior to the youth being found—to offer assistance to them? The group has also discussed gathering statistical data on runaway youth brought into Assessment, since only 1/3 appear to not already be enmeshed in the system—in some way or other.

The Run Response team consists of local professionals/agencies who work with runaway youth. People who attend include professionals who work with runaway youth—Lincoln Police Department, Juvenile Probation, Youth Assessment Center, Detention, and Cedars. This group has started to really make progress with regard to policies for runaway youth and intervening early. Meetings are held the first Tuesday of each month, 1:15 p.m. to 2:45 p.m., at the Youth Assessment Center. Contact Michelle Schindler at 441-5960 for further information.

### **Abused & Neglected Youth**

CASA for Lancaster County continues to be the contact for early and true prevention—through its efforts as in the Infant and Toddler CASA Project. This project focuses on children aged birth to three who have been adjudicated abused or neglected in Lancaster County Juvenile Court. For more information about CASA or becoming a CASA volunteer contact Deb van Dyke-Reis at 474-5161.

## **Team Two**

Youth and families involved in our juvenile justice system are frequently plagued by multiple problems as they enter youth-serving programs—mental health and substance abuse are at the top of this list.

Based upon data collected during planning for the Comprehensive Plan, youth that fail in Diversion have higher rates of mental health and sustenance abuse. Juvenile Diversion is utilizing the SSI and MAYSI-II for youth entering diversion. The Director of Juvenile Diversion, Petra Smith, will analyze the statistics collected over the past year and plan to meet with the incoming Juvenile Coordinator in early October. This information should direct future

efforts. For example, if 85% of youth in Diversion for Shoplifting offenses fail Diversion and score in the “Caution” area for substance abuse—this might indicate that those youth should attend a Drug and Alcohol Class in addition to Shoplifting.

Juvenile Diversion has also developed a Review Team—designed to allow an independent team to examine some of their reasons that youth fail in Diversion. The team of professionals and youth (usually four to five people) meet with the youth and discuss the cases of youth who seem to be failing early on (within a few weeks of signing their plan.) The Juvenile Justice Coordinator is encouraged to attend review sessions. Any professional interested in serving on a review panel should contact the Teen Court Coordinator, Michelle Frank at 437-8829.

### **Team Three**

This group has met very regularly and examined a number of factors that may contribute to the over representation of minority youth in the juvenile justice system including the legal representation of youth in Detention and why youth are filed on as adults; and reducing the use of juvenile warrants issued in Lancaster County. Part of the action strategies included memos to the juvenile judges and speaking to the adult judges (about youth appearing in adult court.).

This group also had a very lively meeting with local juvenile justice providers about diversifying the staff that works with at risk youth—to improve the opportunities for meaningful relationships between staff and youth.

In April the Juvenile Justice Coordinator, the Director of Juvenile Detention, and the City’s Affirmative Action Director met to discuss the possibility of having city or county agencies adopt diversity panel with regard to hiring—especially when hiring in a corrections, detention or juvenile facility. The Affirmative Action Director will pursue this initiative.

At the last meeting in May, 2004, Team Three discussed requesting LB640 funds to work with minority youth—to provide professional role modeling for minority youth. An application packet was designed and a collaborative effort (Lincoln Action Program, the Hispanic Community Center, Lighthouse, and the Indian Center) recently applied to use LB640 funds.

Lancaster County needs to continue to have a group dedicated to examining the extent that over-representation exist in Lancaster County. A DMC/Team Three meeting has been scheduled for July 27, 2004 at 1:00 p.m. at the Human Services Office. The purpose of this meeting is to ask one of the regularly participating agencies to take the lead in the efforts to ensure that the over-representation of minority youth continues to be a priority in Lancaster County. For information about upcoming meetings, feel free to contact the Disproportionate Minority Contact Coordinator at 770-3282.

A meeting has also been schedule for October 20, 2004, for all non profit youth serving agencies to address progress they have made toward their pledge to diversify staff.

### **Team Four**

The group assisted with developing a book of uniform terminology and having agencies agree to use those terms uniformly. Those booklets have been distributed to all agencies that receive Nebraska Crime Commission funds for 2004-2005 and were distributed to the Juvenile Justice Review Committee in July 2004. The Nebraska Crime Commission also received a copy of that booklet.

All non profit agencies have been asked to begin using those terms, which is a tremendous step in being able to evaluate our juvenile justice programs across the board.

This team also worked very diligently in trying to establish uniform place to store juvenile justice data. Although a grant was written in the fall of 2003, a number of meetings happened in the Spring, and many of the key players in our system did not agree to a uniform system.

Currently, the plan is that The Hub will utilize Rite Track and will set the path for centralized data collection in Lancaster County.

Lancaster County Human Services has posted relevant juvenile statistics on its website and plans to update the data annually during the month of October (just in time for the Nebraska Crime Commission grants!)

### **Team Five**

The majority of Team 5 has been spent developing a project called The Hub—a transitional services network for youth/young adults ages 16-24. It focuses on educational opportunities, employment and careers, living situations, and community life functioning including behavioral health. The intent is to re-connect disconnected youth to families and the community and help them transcend successfully into adulthood. We have done the following to date:

- Raised \$250,000 to staff and open The Hub.
- Found a location and donated furniture to outfit the center.
- Put out a job description for the project director.
- Determined Lancaster County will supervise and financially manage the project.
- Developed and are receiving Memorandums of Understanding from 40 partners.
- Developed policies and protocols for taking intakes and referrals.
- Are investigating the use of Rite Track as The Hub MIS System.